

The Spirit of the Kingdom

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[0 : 00] We are beginning a new series this morning, and I'll explain why in a few minutes in my introduction.

But we're looking in Acts. We're in the book of Acts, and that's an incredible book all by itself. We're looking at Acts chapter 2, verses 42 to 47.

That will be what we're studying, but today we're doing kind of an introduction to it. So give me some leeway here to look at the first two chapters of Acts to kind of paint the picture for where we're going.

Okay, so I'm not going to deal with those texts, those verses specifically today. I will highlight them, but we'll get into them starting, Lord willing, after Mother's Day.

Who knows? Maybe we'll start on Mother's Day. We'll see. But we'll get into those verses. But today is more of an introduction. Let's pray. Father, thank you.

[1 : 10] Thank you that you're always with us. Lord, we know we who have been sealed by the Holy Spirit until the day of redemption.

Father, we know you are present in our lives. We know you are present in our lives. And we lean upon you. We lean upon you for those times where we're hurting most.

And even in times of great joy, we lean upon you to rejoice right and not to idolize those things that you give us. And we're not with joy and gratitude. And we're not with joy.

And we're not with joy. And we're not with joy. We're not with joy. We're not with joy. So, Father, we know you're with us. And thank you that you're with us now in this service. And thank you that you're with me. Thank you for being with Sandy and I as we traveled this past week and sought to serve a family that was grieving.

That is grieving. Oh, Lord. Be with the Stone family. Be with us now. Those of us who are grieving. Those of us who are hurting.

[2 : 34] Those of us who are perplexed. Be with us now. Be with us. Those of us who are, Lord, who are just rejoicing. Life is good. And providence is good. And we're just, Lord, be with us all.

We're all in various places of need and of life. What we do need is Jesus. All of us at all times. And we need the word of the Lord at all times.

So, will you please grant your servant grace to preach your word under the power of your spirit and according to the scriptures. That Jesus might be glorified.

That a message might be given from these passages, Lord, that will speak to the hearts of your people. May we see Jesus in all of it. And we long for what he gives us.

May we submit ourselves. Be with us now in Christ's name. Amen. Acts chapter 2, beginning at verse 42.

[3 : 34] And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul.

And many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all as any had need.

And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God, having favor with all the people.

And the Lord added to their number. Day by day, those who were being saved. That is the word of the Lord.

Amen. Amen. Amen. You may be seated. Thank you. Praise to you. Thank you.

[5 : 05] The pandemic sort of has lessened. Even though we're hearing of a new variant here coming through. We don't know what is in store. We know God is with us in the midst of it.

But churches are coming back together. They're opening their doors, those that still exist. Some have not weathered the pandemic well. They won't open again. But as we're coming back together, we have to begin to ask the important questions.

What should the church look like? What's our purpose? What's our vision? What's our mission? And when we talk about mission and vision, too often we forget that God hasn't left that up to us to figure out.

What? He tells us what his vision and mission for his church is. Now we get to say, Lord, help us to show that in our local context, which are different.

But God doesn't leave that up to us to figure out the mission and vision of his church. He does. Always has. He shows us what our church should look like.

[6 : 21] So all churches, I think, are coming, especially in this country, are kind of reevaluating and thinking through. I'm talking to pastors in different parts of the country who've all been through the storms.

They're saying, what should things look like? Some pastors are moving on, leaving the ministry. A friend of mine is now planting a church. That's leaving history to go plant. Things are changing. But what should the church look like? I was struck some years ago reading about this situation where a pastor was teaching a Bible study.

And eight hours later, he was just finishing up. For the next 10 days, he spent 12 hours a day teaching through the entire Bible.

All of this was not what he had planned. It was the congregation that said, we want this. That pastor was David Platt.

[7 : 25] And he did this in an underground church in Asia some years ago before the pandemic. He experienced what I think is revival. Revival. Revival.

Revival. Revival is when the sovereign spirit of God comes upon the church in an extraordinary manner to increase the church's holiness and usefulness for the honor of Jesus.

Revival. In revival, Christ's presence is powerfully felt among his people as he has his way. And then that spills out from the church into the community.

And communities are changed. Historically, cities have been changed. Even nations. it's dramatic it doesn't have to be it could happen to one church it could happen to a group of churches but when the spirit comes with power we become as one writer described revival we become a people saturated with God I mention this because in my studies I am convinced that when God sends revival he moves the church in the direction of the passage I just read to you not everything but in that direction we need the spirit to fill our churches because only then can we become devoted to the priorities of the spirit and be a true fellowship of the spirit we need our fellowship to be strengthened so this morning I just want to say one thing the spirit of the kingdom is the hope of the church it's our only real help so before diving into this passage like I said I want to give an overview I want to look at what leads up to it and that's important so let's first of all why why did the spirit do this what's happening here in Acts chapter 2 notice the context you know the story this is this is the the immediate result of the preaching of the gospel after the resurrection and ascension of Christ it happens on the day of Pentecost that's important because we just celebrated Easter Easter always comes at the time of year known as Passover it's a Jewish holiday I'm sure you're familiar with that you saw the movie to Ten Commandments you know when the the lamb is slaughtered and and the blood is put on the doorpost during the time of the Egyptian bondage of the nation of Israel and and and the death angel flows through uh the land and strikes down the firstborn of all the Egyptian children because Pharaoh would not let the people of God go and the death angel passed over the homes that had the blood a sacrifice had been made the blood upon the doorpost well 50 days

[10 : 51] Pentecost 50 days after that comes the day of Pentecost another Jewish holiday and it celebrates the goodness of God and the cycle of the seasons and the fruitfulness of the earth it was on that day of Pentecost after Jesus had been crucified resurrected and ascended 50 days later here we are on this great day and the apostle Peter preaches the greatest sermon of this life hmm he begins the sermon in verse 18 and ends it in verse 40 the result of that preaching is verse 41 I hope you have your Bibles it's verse 41 it says so those who received this word were baptized and they were and they were added that day about 3,000 souls so to the band of disciples that were left and it was more than the 11 remember Jesus is dead he killed himself 11 but there were more Mary's there and other disciples how many

I don't really know but there was a group of people there and they are waiting Jesus told them to stay put and they're waiting and now the day of Pentecost has come and now 3,000 more believers are added to their band you see when people are saved this is what receiving his word means when they say they received his word they were saved and then they were baptized and became part of the church how they expressed this how did they express becoming part of the church they joined the local church there they became part of the church of Jerusalem and they stayed all those pilgrims who had come from all around the Roman world they had come for Pentecost and now they won't go home they stayed many of them stayed in Jerusalem instant mega church 3,000 souls because the Holy Spirit came upon the first disciples of Jesus and in their obedience to him to bear witness to him boom the church the New Testament church is born powerfully so three points basically first of all the spirit comes as a result of a divine kingdom promise keep in mind the book of Acts is part two

Luke the gospel is part one Luke he wrote two books one gospel one historic history of the church's expansion so the book of Acts essentially ends with the scene that ended the gospel the ascension of Christ but Acts shows that Jesus had two great priorities as the risen Christ is hanging out with his disciples he has two great priorities he wants to address with his disciples Acts chapter one just turn the page verse three the Bible says he presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many note this word proofs appearing to them during 40 days and speaking about the kingdom of God so over for over a month the risen savior met with them we see some of those meetings recorded for us at the end of the gospels he's meeting with them for 40 days and he wants them to be clear about one thing first that he's alive he ate with them he let them touch him remember Thomas touching the wounds he wanted to be clear that I am alive bodily I'm not a spirit I'm not a hallucination I am a human being and more and much more and I'm alive so he eats with them and he's there with them and then he begins to teach driving home what he wants them to know he talks about the presence the purpose and the power of his kingdom the kingdom of God what is the kingdom of God it's the reign of God over all of creation but it's being expressed particularly in relationship to the king who is Jesus and so the church is not the kingdom the kingdom is bigger than the church but the church is the visible the first visible expression of the reality of the reign of God in Jesus Christ but the disciples weren't thinking about that they were thinking about what's in it for us they were thinking about what is the kingdom of God in relation to Israel because for them Israel was the kingdom of God their vision of the kingdom was too small like some people are so fixated on America and you talk to some people you think America was the center of the kingdom of God brothers and sisters that's really too small to them the coming of the kingdom if you go back to chapter 1 verse 6 you hear them ask the question to them the coming of the kingdom meant the nation of Israel would rise once again and be the queen of the nations they wanted they wanted something that was really important they wanted freedom they wanted freedom that's not bad but Jesus says to them basically it's none of your business if you look at verse 6 I mean chapter 1 I mean he's like and they say Lord when would this time restore the kingdom of [16:49] Israel he says verse 7 it is not for you to know times or seasons that the father has fixed by his own authority in other words none of your business Kevin Smith translation none of your business but instead focus on something else he wants them to focus on the bigger vision of the kingdom of God coming with power that's why he taught them to pray our father in heaven hallowed be thy name what do you say thy kingdom come thy will be done he had taught them to pray this way because that's the issue not the kingdom of man not the kingdom of people the kingdom of God in his reign and so Jesus is getting them prepared so in chapter one verses four and five he says to them don't leave

Jerusalem wait for the promise of the father which you have heard from me for John baptized with water but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now so he says listen I got something for you the promise of the kingdom this is the divine this is the promise of the spirit you are going to have an endowment an empowerment that would help you live in this fallen world to be my people you need the promise of the spirit it's the same spirit if you were to go back to Ezekiel 37 don't turn there just check it out for yourself you know the passage it's the passage of the dry bones where Ezekiel where God says Ezekiel look at these dry bones he's like he says Ezekiel can these dry bones live it's a valley of dry bones meaning they're dead people skeletons they're skeletons and Ezekiel says oh Lord you know because I sure don't and then what did he say to him preach to the dry bones prophesy preach to the dry bones preach my word and when

Ezekiel started preaching the word of God then the bones stood up they came together the skeletons formed up together here you got skeletons standing up there and then he said oh Ezekiel call for the spirit and the spirit of God flowed through and life came in flesh she knew go back and read it's a powerful passage and so this and there's a great army is formed the army of God not to wage war with guns and swords or whatever but to be a spiritual army endued with his presence and power family the axe we are that army it was a dry it began with the dry bones of the house of Israel they're falling away from the truth and God revived a remnant of them that they might become his army and we are part of that army he promised

Jesus had promised even in John 16 he says I tell you the truth it is to you you are vanished that I go away for if I do not go away the helper will not come to you but if I go I will send him to you when he comes he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment who is the helper he's talking about he's talking about the spirit of God I mean the spirit of God the promised spirit of God comes he will empower he will convict he will convict the world he will cause people to see their sin and that judgment is coming but they will also cause them to believe in the good news that God saves sinners has mercy upon us Christ promised supernatural reinforcements to his disciples and here on the day of

Pentecost the reinforcements come the second thing is the spirit comes with power so we can bear witness to Jesus notice Acts 1:8 but you receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth the word for power you've heard this before dynamis we get our word dynamite from it power means ability you will be enabled when the spirit comes you in other words you can't you couldn't do it before he told he's telling them you couldn't be faithful to bear witness before but when I send my presence the spirit of God when I send spiritual reinforcements now you will be able to bear witness for me it's striking that the word witness is where we get our word martyr from they would bear witness with their very lives they would lose their lives and bear witness to Jesus some still do today in different parts of the world we may not lose our lives like that but to follow Jesus is to lose your life to him to give your life to him to deny yourself and take up your cross and follow him that's discipleship and when the spirit comes that the spirit enables us to bear witness to be that witness for

[23 : 05] Jesus it's serious it's serious you say but pastor Kevin the spirit has come we have the spirit of God yes hallelujah and doesn't mean we say hallelujah and praise God all the time we have the spirit we have the presence of God but are we bearing witness it's hard to bear witness sometimes I think it's harder for them actually and for people like them who when they bear witness they get we're not there thank you Lord we're not there but man we still find it difficult don't we to bear witness to Jesus because the pressure even though it's not fatal the pressure is still there to be quiet we have our own insecurities in our hearts we have our own fears and dealing with our own stuff it's hard to sometimes open your mouth that's between you and I don't know what your motivation and what keeps you back if anything keeps you back some of us have the gift of evangelism we can witness to anybody I mean I've seen people witness to people I mean I'm just saying are you kidding me this is not the time the cop has given you a ticket woman and my mother-in-law witness to the cop but we struggle we need help to be a witness to Jesus we need help we need God to do some kind of surgery going on and something is going on in us that keeps us from opening our mouths and people right now are hurting so badly I mean you can talk they want hope and we have the hope but it's hard for whatever reason the spirit wants to he's there to help you deal with whatever it is that's holding you back will you give that will you bring that to him will you talk to him about what it is that keeps your mouth shut when the sometimes people will say things that will just say they just cry out they just they just a lob I call it a lob just tell me about Jesus and we can't we just our mouths just what happens what's going on there the Lord can help us with that I've experienced it let's be honest God helps me believe me I need help I was talking to a man just the other day a couple weeks ago I've been one of I was praying about Lord he's kind of a neighbor he goes in and out across the street from me I said Lord please I want to talk to this guy he had told me he was hurting and didn't know what to do with his life lob but I was busy I couldn't really talk and I had to say and months have gone by I've not followed up with this dear brother so I finally he showed up and I had a chance to share phone numbers and I just told him listen that emptiness you feel in your life is because God hasn't filled it for you and he didn't cut my head off he didn't punch me in the face he just said you're right I said can we talk some more about this because he was on his way out the door so he gave me his number so he and I are getting together

to talk about Jesus family I'm just saying if he did

it for me he'll do the same for you listen we all got the same issues most of us it's not easy to talk about Jesus in a culture that doesn't want to hear him but listen there are people out there who do want to hear we just got to be willing but more than that we need the spirit to help us we must pray for help pray for help the last thing I want to say is that the spirit also gives us kingdom priority this is number three you get the first two I hope first two remember let me go back make sure I got the wording right so I won't confuse you the spirit comes as a result of a divine kingdom promise remember that one the spirit then comes to bear witness to Jesus and now we come to the last one which is a summary the spirit comes to give us kingdom priorities and that's verse 42 that gets played out for the rest of the passage and throughout the first ten chapters or so of the book of Acts notice what the spirit does and they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and the fellowship and the breaking of bread and the prayers notice the articles and all of them we'll talk about that as we go along when the spirit of God makes the church alive that church experiences widespread devotion to the spirit's priorities remember I told you in the beginning about David Platt and the people were so hungry for the word of God that they couldn't they just said keep teaching don't stop eight hours a day he's teaching the word of God they were devoted to the apostles teaching they woke up in a hunger for the word of God the word devoted there has the idea of doing something with intense effort with the possible implication despite difficulty intense effort but it's hard that's what happens when the spirit comes he says we are devoted we will not give up on these four great priorities that God has set for his church and you're going to see later something else happens they're devoted to the teaching to the fellowship note that word fellowship we come back to it to the breaking of bread that's the Lord's supper and to the prayers prayers all of these become hugely important for the church and what happens as we go down through the passage is the fellowship grows the people of God share this great love and devotion to each other and to the church to the body and what happens there is that God begins doing stuff that no one can explain other than that God did it miracles powerful and power encounters if you want to call whatever God reveals himself in powerful ways in the church you can't command miracles God does that what he does what he wants to do but I want you to see how this ends verse 47 praising God having favor with all the people we'll come back to why later and then the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved the Lord added when they began to bear witness to the Lord and the power of his spirit the spirit

of God saved people they didn't do it they couldn't answer all their questions they couldn't they couldn't answer everything they had they had answers to some of their questions but that wasn't the point they had the gospel and they had the power and presence of the spirit and they were willing they were yielding themselves to God and God began to do what no one else can do he saves and he didn't save people out there he added to the church he brought them into the body so those people could be discipled and grow and have a community of grace surrounding and encourage him that's the picture and read through the book of Acts go over this week if you get a chance read those first ten chapters read the whole thing but notice this is the church in Jerusalem we know more about this church than most churches in the new testament so Ephesus is probably second you follow what's happening there it's not a perfect church this church has

Ananias and Sapphira this church has cultural what's the word I want to use dysfunction prejudice cultural prejudice I mean this church is not perfect but man it was the place of the spirit I'm so excited when the ladies were praying yesterday we were praying for the spirit of God that's who we need we need him desperately because listen our bones are a little dry we're not dead don't get me wrong we're alive we're the people of God we have the spirit of God but our bones are a little dry I know mine's are dry and tired and weary heartbroken whatever it is you're going through hurting we need the spirit to manifest himself among us to renew our fellowship even stronger and to renew our sense of

God's vision and purpose for his church and for this church in this place and if you're listening wherever your church is you need the same thing we need him and if you study revival you'll know historically speaking revival always comes after God moves his people to pray it's always prayer first it seems at least in the west prayer before he comes with power he's still the same God so let me ask you some questions in this real quick search your hearts are the spirit's priorities really your priorities you say well how do I know where do you spend your time your talent and your treasure how do you spend your money what do you dream about where's your imagination you'll know

whatever you dream about imagine those are your priorities what do you love most what gets you going those are the things you love most are the spirit's priorities anywhere in that list will you pray will you pray for yourself will you pray for your church will you pray that's how they began acts 114 all these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer that was what they were doing when the spirit of

[35 : 03] God fell upon them in power will you pray for the spirit to fill our church and to fill your family will you do that will you pray for the spirit to fill your own heart and deal with whatever idolatries or confusions or pain or lack of faith whatever it is it's all kinds of things ask him to deal with what's going on inside of you so that we together that you can be free and we together can be free to seek the spirit's priorities for his church for our lives so Jesus might be glorified even more in new city fellowship what is our vision we could talk more about that look at this passage that's my vision that's what I'm praying for new city in this place father help us blessed be your name will you please come and visit us with the power of your spirit will you please come and revive we're not dead but lord we're a little dry will you water us with your spirit help us lord we want to be your people we want to exist for your glory we want to make

Jesus known in word and in deed help us in Jesus name amen